A Survey on Teachers' Perception and Practice of ICC Assessment of University English Learners in China

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Abstract: Despite the increasing attention paid to developing intercultural communicative competence (ICC) of foreign language learners in recent years among linguistic scholars and practitioners, few studies could be found concerning ICC assessment, especially ways in which different dimensions of ICC should be assessed. The present study aims to explore the status quo of ICC assessment in English programs in China and feasible approaches to testing ICC. Data revealing university English teachers' attitudes and methods they used in ICC assessment were collected through a nation-wide survey on university English teachers' perception of ICC and their teaching practices in China. The findings showed that, despite a high awareness, among the subjects of the survey, of the importance of developing students' ICC in English classes, few teachers have made any attempts to assess their students' ICC due to the complex and intangible nature of its constructs. In addition, the minority who have made such an attempt often opted for objective assessments, which are mainly used to test students' S*avoirs* (*Savoir* and *Savoir Comprendre*), and are less feasible to evaluate two other more important and difficult dimensions of ICC, *savoir faire* and *savoir être*. The present paper also explores the reason for the current situation of ICC assessment in China, with a hope to provide English teachers with necessary guidance on assessing their students' ICC.

Keywords: Intercultural communication competence, assessment, English teaching

1. Introduction

In the past decade, there was a shift in the focus of language teaching from linguistic competence to communicative competence, since it was agreed by second language acquisition researchers, language teachers, and teacher educators that learning a foreign language is not just about learning the grammar and the vocabulary and a set of idioms and phrases. In recent years, however, we see another change in the conceptualization of foreign language learning, i.e., the objective of foreign language learning is no longer defined in terms of the acquisition of communicative competence in a foreign language, which refers to a person's ability to act in a foreign language in linguistically, sociolinguistically, and pragmatically appropriate ways (Council of Europe, 2001); rather, it is defined in terms of intercultural competence (ICC), which is "the ability of a person to behave adequately in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes and expectations of representatives of foreign cultures" (Meyer, p. 138). As a result, there is a call that EFL in the 21st century should turn from TEFL (teaching English as a foreign language) into TEIL (teaching English as an international language), the fundamental goal of which is to train language learners

to become an "intercultural speaker", who knows about the universal rules in intercultural communication and has the sufficient ICC.

Thanks to this increasing recognition of the cultural dimension as a key component of language teaching, the multiple research projects and publications on the topic, and numerous attempts made by TEIL teachers to integrate interculturality—the active participation in communication helped by critical awareness and analysis and motivated by the appreciation of diversity as the foundation of society—into language teaching in the context of super physical and virtual mobilities and the internationalization of higher education, the past few years have witnessed recognizable changes in English teaching and learning in China, although there is still a long way to go before these changes can reach the degree of transformation.

However, compared with the effort dedicated to improving ICC teaching practices, such as innovating teaching approaches and methods and organizing teaching activities, the assessment of ICC seems to have long been left in a grey shadow in China, at both the research and educational level. The lack of consensus on the construct of ICC, the absence of specific teaching objectives, the limitation of assessment tools and procedures all contribute to the difficulty of assessing ICC in the foreign language teaching context. Research about the assessment of ICC is far from satisfactory. A review of literature has shown that there is little research on how Chinese teachers of English assess language learners' ICC. A preliminary survey of the articles (conducted by the authors in 2011) included in the CNKI (China Knowledge Infrastructure) database reveals that in the past five years, compared with more than 2200 articles published on teaching ICC in the journals recognized by the CNKI, only approximately 20 articles were on assessing ICC. The scant number of the articles on ICC assessment indeed suggests extreme inadequacy of the attention that EFL scholars and teachers in China have paid to this aspect.

Assessing is an integral part of intercultural language teaching and learning. As Sinicrope contends, "Assessment should play a key role in helping educators to understand and improve students' ICC capacities, providing an empirical basis for tracking development, motivating learning, examining outcomes, and indicating areas for constructional improvement" (Sinicrope et al., 2007, p. 59). The aspects of the curriculum that are assessed will most likely be those that teachers include in the curriculum and programs that they develop. The National College English Curriculum Requirements (2004) set the goal of English teaching as "…to develop students' integrative English skills, especially the listening and speaking ability, so that they will be able to communicate effectively through speaking and writing in their future work and social activities, and meanwhile, to enhance their ability to study independently and improve their intercultural communicative competence so as to meet the need of our country's social development and international communication" (p. 2). This shows that the new syllabus has stressed the importance of improving students' ICC. If we recognize ICC as one of the objectives of a foreign language course, evaluation and testing must be carried out to provide feedback on the effectiveness of instruction and to enhance learners' motivation.

The present study aims to explore the status quo of ICC assessment in English programs at the tertiary education level in China, as part of the intentions outlined by the "Project of university English teachers' cognition of ICC and their teaching practices in China". A nation-wide survey was conducted, with a purpose to discover a) the teachers' attitudes towards ICC assessment; and b), the real practices of these teachers concerning ICC assessment.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Constructs of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

Since its first emergence in the 1980s, the concept of ICC has been discussed from different perspectives by scholars from different disciplines and fields with different backgrounds. Byram defined ICC as "the knowledge, skills and abilities to participate in activities where the target language is the primary communicative code and in situations where it is the common code for those with different preferred languages" (1997). It can also be defined as the complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself (Fantini, 2000), and the set of attitudes, approaches, special behavioral and reflection abilities facilitating integration in intercultural situations (Deardorff, 2006). Thus, intercultural competence is multi-layered and the dimensions of intercultural competence, which express in various models suggested by scientists, therefore, depend on its notion.

It is evident that scholars do not adduce a unified structure of ICC. However, they do not refute the viewpoint that intercultural competence comprises 4 key elements – knowledge, attitudes, abilities/skills and critical/cultural awareness, which is derived from Byram's model (2005), the most representative and influential among all the existing models. Byram identified four dimensions involved, *Savoir, Savoir-comprendre, Savoir-faire,* and *Savoir-être*. "Savoir" means general knowledge of relevant socio-cultural groups and their significant communicative activities and events. "Savoir comprendre" refers to skills of interpreting and relating. "Savoir-faire" includes skills of identification, discovery, and synthesis of patterns and perspectives and of potential sources of miscommunication and incompatibilities. It also includes skills needed to negotiate agreement on conditions of conflict. "Savoir-être" refers to general attitudinal dispositions, including a curiosity with and an openness to differences, a readiness to suspend disbelief and judgment with respect to others' meanings, beliefs and behaviors, and a willingness to understand and be sensitive to the perspective of others. To fully analyze how well an English learner can perform in an intercultural situation, we need to measure all the four dimensions of ICC.

2.2. Research on ICC Assessment

Despite the positive development of the theoretical foundation of ICC, its measurement has made little progress to date. There have not been many studies on ICC assessment, and most of them aim to work out approaches and methods which can help overseas students and sojourners developed ICC through self-assessment or self-evaluation. For example, Chen and Starosta (2000) developed the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) based on their theories on Intercultural Communication Competence and intercultural sensitivity. It is a 24-item inventory which consists of five factors, representing five aspects of intercultural sensitivity --- Interaction Engagement, Respect for Cultural Differences, Interaction Confidence, Interaction Enjoyment, and Interaction Attentiveness. For each item in the scale, there are five choices ranging from 5 – strongly agree to 1 – strongly disagree. Testees choose from 1 to 5 to answer those 24 questions.

Hammer, Bennet and Wiseman (2003) developed the IDI (Intercultural Development Inventory) questionnaire to study the stage in which the assessee is in DMIS: Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. YOGA (Your Objectives, Guidelines, & Assessment) inventories, developed by Fantini（2000）aim to assess ICC components and the developmental stages at which the assessee is. Other scholarly efforts on ICC assessment include the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory by Kelley and Myers (1999), the Overseas Assignment Inventory by Tucker (1999), the Multicultural Awareness-Knowledge-Skills Survey by D'Andrea et al. (1991), and the Culture General Assimilator by Cushner and Brislin (1996).

However, these methods have little to do with ICC education of university students in a context where English is taught as an international language, and thus may not be effective if applied to the EFL curriculum. In addition, since many of these assessment methods are scales or questionaires, they cannot measure learners' ICC in a comprehensive and productive way. This situation presents new opportunities and new challenges for educators and administrators. Today, we need to rethink not only our goal, but also how we design and implement language courses and consider carefully how we develop, measure, and monitor the development of students' intercultural competence.

2.3. Assessment Methods of ICC

Black and William (1998) suggest that assessment include all activities that teachers and students undertake to get information that can be used diagnostically to alter teaching and learning. Under this guidance, assessment of ICC should contain both formative and summative formats. The former is carried out during the course as an ongoing process. It is essential because 1) it gives students guidance on their performance, and helps improve the learning process; and 2) ICC "evolves over a lengthy and continuing process" (Fantini, 2005, p. 2), it provides feedback on a student's progress over a period so that any errors or difficulties can be identified and corrected. Summative assessment, which evaluates the learners' achievement at the end of a course, is used to grade students and summarize achievement to provide teachers, students and parents with information on students' levels. Both formats are inevitable for the evaluation of a TEIL program to find out the effectiveness of the curriculum or consequences for students' future. As a result, the combination of both formative and summative assessment should be the best way conducted in TEIL curriculum in China (Wang, 2007).

Many scholars and practitioners have tried to propose and implement methods for assessing ICC in their teaching. Standard cultural tests, which consist of multiple-choice questions, were first adopted and are still widely used. Though they have the advantage of being easy to administer and correct, they cannot provide information or evidence on one's ICC because they only test factual knowledge, which is sometimes generalized and stereotypical. Assessment tools, such as diagnostic scales (e.g. Fantini, 2006; Allen & Herron, 2003) which are composed of Likert type items, have also been largely criticized. Ruben casts doubts on these tests, saying that: "the validity of data of this type rests fundamentally on the presumption that respondents have the desire and ability to engage in valid self-assessment" (Ruben, 1989, p. 231).

Darla K. Deardorff, by conducting a Delphi study (an interactive communication structure between the researcher(s) and 'experts' in a field), collected and analyzed data from 24 U.S. postsecondary institutions and 23 world distinguished scholars in the field of intercultural communication on ICC assessment. All the participants in this project agreed that ICC can be measured in its separate components and not holistically. Deardorff found that both groups of institutions and scholars agreed that it is important to assess students' intercultural competence and that it should be measured for a period of time as opposed to one point in time. They also contended that the best way to assess intercultural competence is through a mix of qualitative and quantitative measures. Among the ICC assessment ways recommended by the participatory institutions and scholars, the following received 95% acceptance from the institutions and scholars, which are primarily qualitative in nature:

- observation by others/host culture
- case studies
- student interviews
- analysis of narrative diaries
- self-report and other report instruments
- triangulation (multiple methods)

Michael Byram suggests working from a portfolio that he calls an "autobiography of intercultural experiences", which he describes in this manner: "It is problem-focused, it only deals with experiences which reflect difference and there may be a tendency to focus on difficulties rather than pleasurable experiences, but 'key experiences' are not necessarily difficult or problematic" (2005, p. 14).

2.4. ICC Testing in China

In China, attempts to assess or test EFL learners' ICC could rarely be found. The most prominent effort is made in TEM-8, which is a test of the advanced level for English majors. TEM-8 aims to evaluate English language teaching and learning at the end of the fourth-year undergraduate program in the light of the College English Curriculum Requirements, and to bring about beneficial backwash effects on teaching and learning, so it is the most important proficiency test for English majors. In 2005, TEM introduced General Knowledge as one part of TEM-8 weighing 10% of the whole paper. The General Knowledge part aims mainly to evaluate students' linguistic, literature and cultural knowledge, which are required by the English major teaching curriculum. However, the culture test in TEM-8 adopts the assessment paradigm that is best aligned with traditional views of learning, namely, the conception of culture as a fixed body of knowledge. The focus within this psychometric paradigm is on standardized testing of fixed content through objective procedures and the basic approach to understanding student learning is through comparison with either the performance of other students or a predetermined standard or cut-score. It neglects the other components of the ICC, namely skills, attitudes, and awareness.

3. Research Methods

This study is part of a nation-wide project on university English teachers' cognition of ICC and their teaching practices in China funded by China's Foundation of Social Sciences. A nationwide survey was conducted in order to investigate English teachers' perception and practices of ICC teaching. A questionnaire has been developed and posted on the website: http://www.chinacafic.org:8080/wenjuan/. It is composed of the following three sections:

I.   *Teachers' personal characteristics:* Including their age, gender, academic qualifications, major, years of teaching, overseas experiences, ICC training experiences;

II.   *Their cognition of ICC, and their teaching practices of ICC:* Including their idea of ICC components, English teaching, and ICC teaching;

III. *Their teaching practices of ICC:* Including the students they taught, the textbooks they used, their perception of goals of English teaching, the aspects of ICC they covered, the kinds of activities they carried out, and the way they assessed their students' ICC.

The participants are from 39 universities in China which were sampled from all Chinese universities through the PPS (probability proportional to size) sampling method. These universities are located in the seven geographical regions across China (North China, Northest China, Northwest China, East China, South China, Southwest China, Central China), covering universities of various categories, including comprehensive universities, and universities of different specialties, such as engineering, education, medicine, foreign languages, economics, and agriculture. Thirty English teachers were randomly selected from each of these universities. The participants were informed of the website on which the questionnaire was posted and were requested to complete the questionnaire within 30 days. Since some selected teachers did not submit the questionnaire before the deadline for certain reasons, we eventually collected 1,078 valid responses.

To find out the current situation of ICC assessment in university English classes in China, we asked the following questions in the questionnaire which are directly concerning ICC assessment:

• Is it necessary to assess students' ICC in a college comprehensive English test?
• Have the English teachers in China's universities ever assessed their students' ICC?
• If so, what methods have they adopted to assess it?
• What aspects of ICC have they intended to assess?
• If they have not assessed students' ICC before, do they intend to assess it in the future? And how?
• If they are planning to incorporate ICC into their assessment objectives, what aspects of ICC do they intend to evaluate?

4. Results

4.1. Necessity to Assess ICC

Q1. *Is it necessary to test students' ICC in a college comprehensive language test?*

In order to investigate English teachers recognition of the necessity of ICC assessment, we asked the respondents to show their degree of agreement to the statement "It is necessary to assess students' ICC in a comprehensive language test". 885 of the 1078 respondents answered this question (See Table 1). The numbers of the respondents who showed partial or strong agreement (57.2% and 28.0%) to the statement far exceeded those who expressed partial or strong disagreement (1.7% and 0.1%), and there were 13.0% of the respondents who showed their uncertainty about this statement. The result indicated that the vast majority of the respondents have realized the necessity to incorporate ICC assessment in a language test.

Table 1. Degree of Agreement to the Necessity of ICC Assessment

Degree of Agreement	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Strong disagreement	1	0.1
Partial disagreement	15	1.7
Uncertainty	115	13.0
Partial agreement	506	57.2
Strong agreement	248	28.0
Total	885	100.0

4.2. Willingness to Assess ICC

Q2. *Have you ever assessed students' ICC?*

Q3. *If you have not assessed your students' ICC before, do you intend to assess it in the future?*

884 respondents answered the question whether they have assessed students' ICC in the past. Among them, 47.2% claimed to have done so, whereas 52.8% had no such experience (See Table 2). The latter group were also asked a follow-up question whether they intended to assess students' ICC in the future. 68.9% of the respondents from this group expressed their willingness to implement ICC assessment, while there were still 31.1% of the respondents who did not have the intention to do so (See Table 3).

Table 2. Numbers of Respondents Having or Having Not Assessed ICC Before

	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Teachers having assessed ICC before	417	47.2
Teachers having not assessed ICC before	467	52.8
Total	884	100

Table 3. Willingness to Assess ICC in the Future

	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Teachers willing to assess ICC in the future	322	68.9
Teachers not willing to assess ICC in the future	145	31.1
Total	467	100

4.3. Assessment Methods

Q4. *If you have assessed students' ICC, what methods have you adopted?*
The respondents who have assessed ICC before were provided with a list of common ICC assessment methods, including paper test (which is comprised of multiple choice questions, 'true or false', matching, translation, short answer questions, case studies), oral presentation, role play, projects and were asked to choose one or more methods that they have adopted. They were also encouraged to provide any other methods that they used but were not listed in the questionnaire.

We can see from Table 4 that the majority of the 417 respondents who have assessed students' ICC showed preference for oral presentation, role play and paper test to assess students' ICC. The percentages of respondents who claimed to have used these three methods are 52.5%, 51.5%, and 45.3% respectively, while the number of respondents who used projects to assess students is much lower than the other three. Among all the listed methods in the paper test, 'true or false' claims the highest percentage (24.2%), matching and translation ranked the second (17.3%) and the third (16.8%), while multiple choice questions were the least preferred (9.4%). In addition, only 4.8% of the respondents claimed to have used some other methods than the ones listed in the questionnaire, which include essay writing, group discussion, and field study.

Table 4. Assessment Methods Having Been Used by the Respondents Who Have Assessed ICC Before

	Methods	Number of Respondents		Percentage	
	MCQ	39	189	9.4%	45.3%
	True or false	101		24.2%	
	Matching	72		17.3%	
	Translation	70		16.8%	
	Short-answer questions	62		14.9%	
	Case studies	51		12.2%	
Oral presentation		219		52.5%	
Role play		216		52.5%	
Project		99		23.7%	
Other methods		20		4.8%	

The findings suggest that the ICC assessment methods that the teachers adopted are still centered on the traditional ones, such as paper tests, oral presentations, and role plays, while some newly introduced methods such as observation by others, self-reports, self-reflection diaries, student interviews, critical reports, evaluation forms and surveys did not appear in respondents' answers at all.

Q5. *If you have never assessed students' ICC before and have the intention to do so in the future, what methods are you going to adopt?*

The respondents who have never assessed students' ICC but were willing to do so in the future were further asked what methods they would like to adopt in the future teaching.

As we can see from Table 5, role play, paper test, and oral presentation enjoyed high preference by the respondents, whereas project had a relatively low percentage. Very few other methods were adopted. This result was very similar to that gained from the respondents who have carried out ICC assessment.

For the test paper methods, this group of respondents showed relatively high preference for case studies (20.8%), multiple choice questions (19.6%), and 'true or false' (19.6%). A major difference between the results of this group and that of those who had assessed students' ICC is the percentage of case studies. Up to 20.8% of the respondents intended to use case study as an ICC assessment method in the future. In addition, compared with the 9.4% of respondents who claimed to have used multiple choice questions to assess students' ICC, 20.8% of those who have not measured ICC would like to use multiple choice questions (MCQ) in the future ICC assessment.

Table 5. Assessment Methods to Be Used by the Respondents Who Are Willing to Assess ICC in the Future

	Methods	Number of Respondents		Percentage	
	MCQ	63	155	19.6%	48.1%
	True or false	63		19.6%	
	Matching	35		10.9%	
	Translation	24		7.4%	
	Short-answer questions	50		15.5%	
	Case studies	67		20.8%	
Oral presentation		139		43.2%	
Role play		187		58.1%	
Project		95		29.5%	
Other methods		13		4.0%	

4.4. Objectives of ICC Assessment

Q6. *If you are planning to incorporate ICC into your assessment objectives, what aspects of ICC do you intend to evaluate?*

In order to find out how the respondents perceived the objectives of ICC assessment, we asked the respondents who have assessed ICC before what aspect(s) of ICC they have intended to measure; to those who have not done so, we asked the question what aspect(s) they would like to evaluate in the future. Nine possible objectives were given for them to choose. They were also asked to provide any aspect that they have assessed other than the ones in the list. The results are shown in Table 6 and 7.

Table 6. Aspects of ICC Having Been Measured by the Respondents Who Have Assessed ICC

Aspects of ICC Ever Assessed	Number of Responses	Percentage
Students' knowledge of the cultural facts of the English-speaking countries	319	77.1%
Students' knowledge of the values of the English-speaking countries	291	70.3%
Students' understanding of the cultural meaning of certain words or phrases	271	65.5%
Students' knowledge of the differences between their own culture and the target culture	256	61.8%
Students' understanding of the communicative patterns prevalent in English speaking countries	222	53.6%
Students' understanding of the cultural meaning of non-verbal languages	198	47.8%
Students' ability to express their own culture in English	188	45.4%
Students' understanding and tolerance of the values of alien cultures	177	42.8%
Students' knowledge of the values of the non-English-speaking countries	97	23.4%
Students' understanding of the communicative patterns prevalent in non-English-speaking countries	95	22.9%
Other objectives	2	0.5%
Total	2116	511.1%

Table 7. Aspects of ICC Intended to Be Measured by the Respondents Who Are Willing to Assess ICC in the Future

Aspects of ICC Intended to Be Assessed	Number of Responses	Percentage
Students' knowledge of the cultural facts of the English-speaking countries	280	86.4%
Students' knowledge of the values of the English-speaking countries	257	79.3%
Students' knowledge of the differences between their own culture and the target culture	232	71.6%
Students' understanding of the communicative patterns prevalent in English speaking countries	218	67.3%
Students' ability to express their own culture in English	210	64.8%
Students' understanding of the cultural meaning of non-verbal languages	194	59.9%
Students' understanding of the cultural meaning of certain words or phrases	180	55.6%
Students' understanding and tolerance of the values of alien cultures	159	49.1%
Students' knowledge of the values of the non-English-speaking countries	77	23.8%
Students' understanding of the communicative patterns prevalent in non-English-speaking countries	76	23.5%
Other objectives	4	1.2%
Total	1887	582.4%

For the 417 respondents who have assessed students' ICC, we found that among the nine given choices on students' knowledge of the English-speaking countries, "students' knowledge of the cultural facts of the English speaking countries" has been measured by the largest number of respondents (319), taking up 77.1% of this group. This is followed by "students' knowledge of the values of the English-speaking countries", "students' understanding of the cultural meaning of certain words or phrases", and "students' knowledge of the differences between their own culture and the target culture", which have been tested by respectively 70.3%, 65.5%, and 61.8% of the respondents of this group. "Students' understanding of the

communicative patterns prevalent in English speaking countries", "students' understanding of the cultural meaning of non-verbal languages", "students' ability to express their own culture in English", and "students' understanding and tolerance of the values of alien cultures" have been assessed by a moderate percentage of the respondents of this group. However, two items which are concerned with the culture of non-English-speaking countries, namely, "students' knowledge of the values of the non-English-speaking countries", "students' understanding of the communicative patterns prevalent in non-English speaking countries" have been assessed by only a small number of respondents. Only 2 respondents have assessed the aspects other than these given ones—students' ability to deal with problems occurring in intercultural communication, and students' knowledge and understanding of their own culture, including thinking patterns, values, and beliefs.

The 322 respondents who have not assessed but are willing to assess ICC in the future were asked what aspects of ICC they think should be assessed. The result was very similar to that gained from those who have assessed students' ICC (Appendix: *Table 7*). "Students' knowledge of the cultural facts of English-speaking countries" and "students' knowledge of the values of the English-speaking countries" enjoyed the highest preference, while "students' knowledge of the values of the non-English-speaking countries" and "students' understanding of the communicative patterns prevalent in non- English speaking countries" were considered as the least preferred. Only four respondents mentioned assessing students' abilities to apply their knowledge and skills in real intercultural communications.

5. Discussion

5.1. Incomplete Perception of ICC Construct

From the results, we can see that the vast majority of university English teachers in China have recognized the necessity of incorporating ICC into their language tests and have assessed students' ICC or are willing to assess it. Nevertheless, their knowledge of what ICC is composed of and thus what components of ICC should be assessed is far from adequate. The findings on the aspects of ICC that should be assessed reveal that the respondents gave great priority to the knowledge profile, such as students' knowledge of cultural facts and values of the English-speaking countries, and their knowledge of the differences between their own culture and the target culture, which are easily identified, quantified, and displayed, all aiming at assessing the so-called "shallow learning", such as the memorization of cultural facts (Corbett, 2003, p. 196).

However, the attitudes dimension, such as students' degree of understanding and tolerance of the values of other cultures, and degree of curiosity and openness, and readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about their own, are put in a far less important position. As to the behavior dimension, which includes abilities to interpret their own and target culture, skills and abilities to deal with cultural conflicts, ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction, this has rarely been covered in assessment by these teachers.

5.2. Imposition of Culture of English-Speaking Countries

The finding that very few teachers are willing to assess students' knowledge and understanding of the values and communicative patterns prevalent in non-English-speaking countries reveals that the culture these teachers emphasize is mainly that of English-speaking countries in ICC assessment, while cultures of other countries, which are also an indispensable part of the world culture, are ignored. This indicates that most teachers still consider English as a possession of the countries where English is spoken as the native language, rather than as an international language which helps facilitate intercultural communication throughout the world. Due to the diversity among native speakers on the one hand and the heterogeneous population of non-native speakers on the other, the culture of native speakers can no longer be imposed. As Campbell et al. (1983) once noted, "The major principle of EIL is that when speakers of more than one country or culture interact, more than one set of social and cultural assumptions will be in operation" (p. 35). It seems worth mentioning that EIL will not de-emphasize or undermine the interest in culture but it is to say that English culture is not the sole referent. This point is also stressed in Stern (1992) who notes: "In teaching of English as an international language, there would be no particular culture to which the second language could be related" (p. 25).

5.3. Assessment Methods Lacking Variety

The ICC assessment methods adopted by the surveyed English teachers in China's universities include both objective and subjective methods. However, the subjective methods are limited to the traditional methods such as oral presentations, role plays, and case studies, whereas more recent developments like problem-solving tasks, interviews, portfolio, etc. are seldom applied. In addition, methods which involve learners' self-evaluation have not been used by these teachers, indicating that learners, who should know clearly about their own competences, are excluded from the assessment process.

It is also found that the paper test is one of the most popular ways among English teachers to assess students' ICC. In the Chinese cultural contexts, exams and grades matter a great deal to both teachers and learners. The exam-orientation of Chinese education creates an illusion in Chinese students' minds that testing is the only way to evaluate their acquisition of knowledge/competence and performance. However, this kind of assessment, which is mainly summative in nature, i.e. evaluating students only at the end of the course, tends to neglect the process of students' active involvement and self-assessment in language learning.

6. Conclusion

To conclude, notions of intercultural communication and associated competences are of increasing importance, not only as outcomes of foreign language programs, but also as fundamental targets of college education. Curriculum design and evaluation procedures are like two sides of the same coin, with assessment being an inevitable follow-up to training. Assessment should play a key role in helping educators to understand and improve students'

ICC, providing an empirical basis for tracking development, motivating learning, evaluating outcomes and indicating areas for instructional improvement. It should be kept in mind that when teachers are evaluating the performance of their students, they are also indirectly assessing their own performance as well as the quality of the course. Thus, it is strongly argued that proper care and consideration should be devoted to assessment during the process of ICC teaching.

However, our survey has revealed that the status quo of ICC assessment in university English programs in China is far from satisfactory. College English teachers' knowledge of ICC assessment is still lacking of theoretical basis. With no theoretical guidance, they have taken few actions to measure their students' ICC. The result would be that they are unable to holistically evaluate their students' intercultural communicative competence, and thus not able to make appropriate adjustment to the curriculum and teaching practices.

To ensure the quality of teachers' assessment of ICC, special emphasis should be placed on training of teachers, since evaluation plays a vital role in the job of teaching. This does not only relate to grading student performance, the teacher also needs training in the objective assessment of his own performance and the quality of his teaching materials. We need to be clear about our professional goal: to prepare students for positive intercultural participation through effective communication. We need to consider carefully how to develop, measure, and monitor the development of their intercultural competence. This element of self-assessment is a strong feature in the concept of reflective teaching which has recently come to be seen as an important aspect of teacher training (Lasar, 2003). Our suggestion is that the first step in deciding on how best to assess ICC will be to determine the specific objectives of ICC assessment, and the construct of ICC that characterizes the dimensions to be learned. With these foundational decisions achieved, TEIL programs and faculty will be in a much better position to select, among the array of possibilities, the methods through which assessment can be implemented in making sure that ICC learning really happens.

Indeed, the task of ICC assessment is even more demanding than that of ICC teaching since it involves not only the design and implementation of multi-forms of assessment instruments, but also the increase of rating and evaluating load for teachers. This requires teachers to be fully responsible and highly professional because ICC assessment methods are mainly of qualitative and subjective nature, and assessment cannot be done without teachers' scrupulous examination of students' products and rigorous conformation to the scientific evaluation criteria.

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